(a) whether an agreement has lately been reached between Indian and Pakistani authorities to reduce the armed forces in Siachen;

(b) if so, the details of the agreement; and

(c) the steps since taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Special Recruitment Scheme for people of border areas of J&K

200. SHRI T.S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has started any special recruitment scheme for the eligible people from the border areas of Jammu and Kashmir near Indo-Pak border in the defence forces;

(b) whether the scheme has since been finalized; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Recruitment is carried out for all districts of Jammu & Kashmir, including border areas, as per recruitment policy in the defence forces. The response from these areas has been adequate. In addition, during the year 2003-2004, 7 Infantry Battalions of Territorial Army (TA) comprising 6 Infantry Battalions of TA on 'Home and hearth concept' and one Infantry Battalion of TA of surrendered militants (Ikhwanis) were sanctioned with a total strength of approximately 7332. Recruitment of about 6262 persons has been made from the State of Jammu & Kashmir for these units.

MIG-21 Crashes

201. DR. AKHILESH DAS:
DR. PRABHA THAKUR:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether another MIG-21 jet crashed on January 4, 2005; if so, where and in what circumstances;

(b) the total number of MIG jets that have crashed during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) whether there is some common cause for so many MIGs crashing during the period; if so, the details thereof, and the steps taken to avoid such air crashes involving MIGs?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) A MIG-21 aircraft crashed on 4th January, 2005 at Air Force Station, Nal (Rajasthan). The aircraft caught fire while taking off.

(b) During the last three years from 2002-2003 till 2004-2005, the number of MIG-21 crashed were 12, and 2 respectively.

(c) Out of these 19 accidents, 8 aircrafts have crashed due to Technical Defects, 7 due to Human Error (Aircrew), 2 due to Human Error (Servicing). Of the remaining 2 accidents, the cause of one accident remained unresovled while one is under investigation.

The Indian Air Force continuously undertakes measures to enhance and upgrade flight safety. Steps to enhance the quality of training to improve the skill levels, ability to exercise sound judgement and situational awareness of pilots are being pursued. Constant interaction with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) of concerned countries are also maintained to overcome the technical defects of aircraft.

Defence personnel who lost their lives in Tsunami

202. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of defence personnel including those of Coast Guard who lost their lives due to havoc caused by Tsunami waves in the Indian Ocean on 26th December, 2004, in Andaman Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry and Kerala, force-wise and area-wise;

(b) the number of defence personnel, force-wise and area-wise who have since been missing as a result of the Tsunami of December, 2004; and

(c) how the cases of salary, family pension and other dues payable in respect of those missing have been/are proposed to be decided?